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AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED TO THE

Electors of the Borough of Banbury,

AT THE EXCHANGE HALL,

ON FRIDAY EVENING, MARCH 12th, 1880,

BY

T. GIBSON BOWLES, Esq.

JOHN POTTS, MACHINE PRINTER, BANBURY.

THE REPRESENTATION OF BANBURY.

MR. BOWLES' CANDIDATURE.

MEETING AT THE EXCHANGE HALL.

On Friday evening a meeting of the electors to hear Mr. T. G. Bowles, the Conservative candidate, was held in the Central Corn Exchange. The large hall was nearly filled, and the meeting was a most enthusiastic one. E. W. Tritton, Esq., of Bodicote, and President of the Banbury Working Men's Constitutional Association occupied the chair and there were also present on the platform and in the room, W. H. P. Jenkins, Esq.; Mr. T. L. Atkinson, Mr. J. Fortescue, Mr. W. W. Heming, Mr. J. S. Fortescue, Mr. H. Herbert, Mr. T. W. Douglas, Mr. R. Tanner, Mr. T. Malsbury, Mr. C. F. Herrieff, Mr. J. P. Barford, Mr. H. Dean, Mr. J. Malsbury, Mr. Green, Mr. R. C. Humfrey, the Rev. C. Heaven, Dr. Hudson, Mr. G. Stevens, Mr. F. T. Robinson, Mr. J. S. Wells, Mr. O. V. Aplin, Mr. Barford, jun., Mr. J. Hawtin, Mr. J. M. Wilks, Mr. T. Fowler, Mr. C. N. Page, Mr. Bliss, Mr. H. S. Timpson (Drayton), &c., &c. The appearance of Mr. Bowles on the platform was the signal for loud cheering which was again and again renewed. The galleries were occupied by a number of ladies.

The CHAIRMAN (who was enthusiastically received) said—Ladies and gentlemen,—My first duty to-night—and I need hardly say how great a pleasure it is—is to return thanks—my most sincere thanks—to the members of the Banbury Constitutional Association in electing me as their president—(applause). I thank

you more especially because I am a comparative stranger amongst you, and have had no opportunities of coming before you. It is not from any want of sympathy or feeling for their interests in Banbury that this has been so however, and I trust the longer I live in Banbury I shall be able to visit you oftener and take the greatest interest in all your affairs—(applause). I am sorry I have been unable to attend your meetings before, which is not due to any lack of sympathy with the Conservative cause with which I am very deeply bound up indeed—(applause). You know it is impossible to be in two places at once. Gentlemen, after thanking you I now turn to the all absorbing topic of the day, and that is the election which is before us. It seems to me to be a most important question—this question between the Conservatives and the Liberals at the present time. I might say more. We can hardly call them a party seeing there are so many elements seriously banded together—(applause). I have had very little time to-day to do more than just scan over Mr. Gladstone's address, but there is one bold statement in it which seems to call for more than a passing notice. Mr. Gladstone says, alluding to the foreign policy of the country of our party, that we have aggrandised Russia and lured Turkey on to her dismemberment. But I fearlessly appeal to any observer of the politics of the party who are now ruling this country, I don't care whether Conservative, Liberal, Radical, or Home Ruler, and I ask this question, who contributed to it, if the aggrandisement exists, which I do not fail to see, who is responsible for it but the Liberals—(applause). Our foreign policy is so bound up with our home policy that if we are not prosperous abroad, how can we be prosperous at home—(applause). Feeling this, I ask you to give your undivided attention to Mr. Bowles, and vote for him at the coming election—(applause). I also thank you most sincerely for the patient hearing you have given me, and I again ask you to give your undivided attention to Mr. Bowles—(applause).

Mr. BOWLES, (whose rising was a signal for an outburst of applause and waving of hats which lasted for some time) said, Mr. Chairman, Ladies, and Gentlemen, I am very happy to have this, the first opportunity of meeting in public meeting the electors of the borough of Banbury who have done me the honour to come. This is not a packed meeting remember. You have heard of packed meetings and there is probably one going on at the present moment

in this town—(applause). This, at any rate, is not a packed meeting, but a meeting open to all the electors. To you, and those who are outside the room I would say, the question I have to propose is whether you will have Mr. Samuelson to represent you in Banbury and support his party, or whether you will send me to Parliament to support the Conservative party, as being the best for the country—(applause). I am not afraid to challenge the question as between two men. I do represent myself as a better man than Mr. Samuelson—(applause). You all know the extraordinary value and the marvellous ability, and the great efforts of Mr. Samuelson, yet whilst it may not seem very modest, I do venture to say that I am a better man for Parliament than Mr. Samuelson—(applause). I have been gratified to learn that my advent in your town has been coincident with a return of prosperity to the town—(applause). I understand that as soon as the news of the dissolution was broached or first hinted at a large number of poor men, who the whole winter have wanted work and have been living in a lamentable manner, have suddenly been able to find work—(applause). I am extremely pleased to find that prosperity has thus come to those poor men, and I do hope and trust that it will not cease with the election but that when the election is over they will still retain the work which they have now obtained—("Never.") The great battle is now joined all over the country—(applause). (Mr. Barford entered the platform at this point and was received with loud applause). My opponent has donned his bright armour, has mounted his war horse, and is before you, telling you in an easy and jaunty manner that he has been your member for twenty years and that all you have to do is to elect him again—(A voice, "No.") He does not take much trouble to tell you what he will do when elected. I fancy it would take a great deal of trouble for him to do that—(A voice, "He's done nothing.") But he doesn't try. He says, "I'm your member, elect me again." You have a declaration in Mr. Samuelson's address of the views of one of the great leaders of the Liberal party, and you have in Mr. Gladstone's manifesto an address of at least equal importance from another great leader of the Liberal party. I am going to make a few remarks upon Mr. Gladstone's address. In the first place he refers to the charges made against the Liberal party of associating themselves with the men who are agitating for the repeal of the union between England and Ireland. He says that "those who endangered the union with Ireland were the party that maintained there an alien

Church, an unjust land law, and franchises inferior to our own." He wishes to convey that this was the Conservative party. He does not deny the charge in a direct way. There is very seldom anything direct in his language. But he throws the charge back upon some other party. He says, "those who endangered the union are those who maintained the things he specifies." Well, which is that party that maintained an alien Church? Which is the party that maintained the unjust land laws and franchises inferior to our own? Why you are all aware that ever since 1832 up to the present Government the Liberal party has been in power. Therefore it is the Liberal party that maintained those things. They are the party and not the Conservative party—(applause). He then goes on to say, "at home the ministers have neglected legislation, and aggravated the public distress by the continual checks to confidence." As to the neglect of legislature, I will deal with that another time. But he says they have aggravated the public distress! It is very kind of Mr. Gladstone only to go so far. I am only surprised he did not say they created public distress—(laughter and applause). A large portion of his party have already made this very accusation. They would have you believe that the Conservative Government had locked the sun up in a box to prevent it from shining, and that the wicked Beaconsfield had sent some person with a large supply of water—Sir Wilfred Lawson, say—(laughter)—up into the clouds to discharge it upon the country for its evil—(hisses). But Mr. Gladstone only says, "the ministers have aggravated public distress by continual shocks to confidence." What are the shocks which ministers have so continually made? Have they plundered the brewers and publicans? Have they disestablished any Church—Irish or English? Have they robbed any landowners? Have they encouraged breakers of the law in shooting their landlords? Have they hinted as some have done that the murder of a policeman, or the burning up of a person would cause them to disestablish another Church? These are the things that destroy confidence. Have the Conservatives done any one of them? No. It is not the Conservative party which has done them but the Liberal, and they are the destroyers of confidence. Well, then we come to foreign affairs. I like Mr. Gladstone on foreign affairs, he is so simple and child-like—(laughter). He confessed, not very long ago, that he had paid no attention to foreign affairs before the Crimean war, and it seems to me that

he has not paid more attention to them since; for, speaking about foreign affairs, he says Ministers "have dishonoured the country in the eyes of Europe by filching the island of Cyprus from the Porte under a treaty clandestinely concluded in violation of the Treaty of Paris, which forms part of the international law of "Christendom." This, to anybody who has given any attention to Mr. Gladstone's recent exploits, is the most astounding statement that ever appeared in type. He talks of the Treaty of Paris forming part of the international law of Christendom, and I agree with him. Now the principal article, and central stipulation, of that Treaty is the maintenance of the integrity and independence of the Turkish empire—(applause). But who is the man who has been the greatest opponent of the integrity and independence which the Treaty of Paris maintains? Why Mr. Gladstone, and no other. Who is the man who accepted meekly the tearing up of another of the principal clauses of this very Treaty—the Black Sea clause—when in office in 1871? Why, Mr. Gladstone—(cheers). And yet the man who accepted the repudiation of that principal clause, and disturbed the country to procure the repudiation of the whole of it, now comes to you and asks you to believe that in his opinion it forms part of the international law of Europe. The Treaty of Paris was solemnly re-signed in 1871 by Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet, and having done that what did Mr. Gladstone do? The moment it became a question whether the integrity and independence of Turkey should be maintained, he goes about the country agitating for the expulsion of the Turks from Europe "bag and baggage."—(cheers). The expulsion of the very people the Treaty bound us to protect—(applause). Then he says that "Cyprus was filched from the Porte." I say it was no more filched from the Porte than Mr. Gladstone's hat was filched from his hat maker—(laughter). I assume that Mr. Gladstone pays his hat maker, and we have paid the Porte for Cyprus. I say that the acquisition of Cyprus is no violation of the Treaty of Paris. I think I know as much about these treaties as Mr. Gladstone—and perhaps more—for I have spent a great deal of my time in poring over those muniments of Europe, which Mr. Bright is pleased to call "musty documents," and I defy Mr. Gladstone to point out a line in the Treaty of Paris which prohibits England from making terms with the Porte for the cession of Cyprus. Mr. Gladstone next goes on to say that "the Ministry has aggrandized Russia." This is the man who openly

urged that England should send her fleet to prevent the Turks from getting their own soldiers into the field from their own country at a time when they were engaged in a war of self-defence. Aggrandizing Russia ! It is well for Mr. Gladstone to talk thus—he who bade Russia God-speed in her work of aggrandisement. But here is his own testimony to the kind of aggrandisement the Ministry have caused. For he says that the Ministry has “replaced the Christian population of Macedonia under a debasing yoke.” This shows Mr. Gladstone’s extreme ignorance of the subject. I have been in Turkey and seen its government. So far from the Government of the Turks being too severe, its great defect is that it is not strong enough. There never was a yoke sat so lightly as the yoke which sits on the people of Macedonia. It is too feeble, and the police are not active and energetic enough. But observe. Mr. Gladstone says the Ministry have aggrandised Russia, and yet he admits the Ministry prevented Russia from taking Macedonia away from Turkey and thus stopped her aggrandisement. By Mr. Gladstone’s own showing the only way the Ministry have aggrandised Russia is by taking away some of her conquests. If this is aggrandisement, then I devoutly hope the Liberal party will be aggrandised in the same manner by the number of seats they are going to lose in this present election—(cheers). I next find in this precious document, the following :—“At this moment we are told of other secret negotiations with Persia, entailing further liabilities without further strength.” Here is another extraordinary contradiction. He says the negotiations are secret, and yet he says he knows they will entail further liabilities without further strength. If the negotiations are secret, how can he know what they are going to entail ?—(laughter). Is he more in the secrets of the Government than the Government themselves ?—(hear, hear). I believe that the negotiations will not entail further liabilities upon the country, but are more likely to bring increased strength without increased liabilities. It should be a statesman’s object to make his country prosperous and happy, but the Liberal party are always prophesying and desiring misfortune upon misfortune, and disaster upon disaster for the country, in the hope that it will bring them back to power again—(cheers). Then we come, in Mr. Gladstone’s address, to this general principle—“I must assert the co-equal rights of independent and allied power.” Well, I told you the Liberals were trying to reform. This is an attempt to prove it. But how can we suppose that he believes

the principle he lays down? Why, Mr. Gladstone is the very man who has done his best to induce the country to repudiate and deny this very principle—the man who again and again has denied to Turkey those equal rights he claims for all powers—the man who hounded on the Cossack to dismember Turkey, and urged his own country to send their fleet to co-operate with the Cossack in his bloody and nefarious work. I say it is a mockery for Mr. Gladstone to come to us now and say “I must assert the co-equal rights of independent and allied Powers,” for this principle he has denied and fought against. Well, gentlemen, I have told you what one Liberal says of the present Government, and now I am going to tell you what another Liberal says of it. I believe if the whole of Europe were polled to-morrow you would find one general consent that the greatest, the most capable, and most eminent Liberal in the whole of Europe is M. Gambetta. I have great respect for M. Gambetta. Although he is not of my party I have a great opinion of his ability, and believe he has done the greatest service to his country. I recognise ability, capacity, and patriotism wherever I find them—(applause), I would as readily recognise them in Mr. Gladstone if, by any good fortune, I could find them in him, but I can’t. After having heard what Mr. Gladstone says about the Government, I will now ask you to hear what the more eminent Liberal, M. Gambetta, says in the recognised avowed organ of his views in the French press, the *Republique Française*. It is contained in an article in yesterday’s paper on the elections in England, and is as follows:—“The difference between the two English parties is not sufficiently appreciable to make us hesitate in wishing success to the one whose foreign policy appears to us to fulfil best the imperious exigencies of the European balance of power. The Liberal party has had six years of reflection in which to reconstitute itself, and this long period has not sufficed to impress upon it that a policy of non-intervention and indifference is fatal to the prestige of England and hurtful to the interests of European civilisation. We are all aware that several of its influential members are animated by different ideas, but these are in the minority. Our opinion is, therefore, that by confirming the position, if not absolutely approving the whole foreign policy of the Conservative Cabinet, England will be choosing the wisest course.” This is a remarkable testimony from a foreign Liberal to an English Conservative Government. How is it Mr. Gladstone does not adopt the same tone? I will tell you why. M. Gambetta

has not got an eye on the English Treasury Benches and Mr. Gladstone has—(cheers). I find that even the best Liberal organs in England are taking up the same tone now, and I was very much surprised to read in the *Pall Mall Gazette*—a moderate Liberal Journal—remarks very much to the same effect. That journal points out that if the Liberals were returned to power by a narrow majority—and they cannot be returned by any but a narrow one—they would be entirely in the hands of the most violent men of their party. But not only is this the tone of Liberal journals abroad and of the best Liberal journals of the country, but Liberals themselves, who dared to call their souls their own, say the same thing. There is Mr. Cowen in the north, who says he is a patriot before a Liberal, and because he is a good patriot he is looked upon as a bad Liberal—(cheers and laughter). Mr. Eustace Smith, also in the north, takes a similar view, and a vast number of other Liberals seem anxious to cast off the imputations of being as Liberal as they are thought to be. All men see and feel that the Liberal party is no longer what it once was. It possesses no longer as leaders the class of men who had the honour of their country and the interests of their fellow citizens at heart. Their principles in times gone by were—"Peace, retrenchment, and reform." Excellent principles they are, but what have they been in practice. In the practice carried out by the later members of the party—not by the older men—their peace has become cowardice; their retrenchment stinginess; their reform revolution—(cheers)—and dismemberment—(renewed cheers). Their peace only invites war, their retrenchment only brings inefficiency, and their reform only courts the dismemberment of this great Empire—(cheers). Now they tell you they have repented. They say they don't mean to separate Ireland from England, they don't mean to befriend Russia to the injury of England, and they don't mean to befriend the Obstructionist members of the House of Commons. In fact, their manners, since the election was announced, seem to have become quite mild and charming—(cheers and laughter). Not so long ago they occasionally used such terms to the Conservatives as swindlers and mountebanks, but they have suddenly become so amiable and well-mannered that you might almost take them for Conservatives—(cheer). But I am very much afraid that it is not going to last. You know the old couplet,

"The Devil was sick, the Devil a monk would be.
The Devil was well, the Devil a monk was he."

—(cheers and laughter). I think this is very much the

case with the Liberal party. It is very sick now. They now profess to be as amiable as a monk, but when they get better they will resume the character of the gentleman in the second line of the couplet. You know how the Liverpool Home Rulers announced they had made a compact with Lord Ramsay. You know how Lord Hartington adopted the compact, patted Lord Ramsay on the back, encouraged him, and expressed a hope that he would be sent to Parliament, compact and all. You know, with regard to foreign affairs, how Mr. Gladstone bade Russia God-speed in her extermination of the Turks. You know how Mr. Lowe was not ashamed to stand up before a sane assembly of Englishmen and say that the Emperor of Russia was the father of the fatherless, the defender of the oppressed, and the refuge of the unprotected—(cheers and laughter). You know that Lord Hartington said as soon as Mr. Parnell became better acquainted with the forms of the House he would make an admirable member. Knowing these things, I can't believe that the Liberal party has changed its skin any more than the leopard can change his spots. But let us suppose it is so. If in one short month or six weeks they have so changed their principles, it only shows their utter incapacity to conduct the business of this country. If, from one month to another, they don't know their own little mind on the policy of their own little party, how can it expect them to be able to conduct a consistent and consecutive policy with regard to the affairs of the country? The fact is—that the Liberal party is a party of "squeezables"—(laughter). Their principles sit very lightly upon them. They remind me very much of the American candidate, who, after making a long speech to his constituents, said, "Them's my principles—(laughter)—but if you don't like them they can be changed"—(renewed laughter, and loud cheers). The Liberal party say, gentlemen, if you don't like our principles, remember they can be changed—(laughter.) But really it seems to me quite a stretch of courtesy to go talking about the Liberal party, for it hardly now can be said to exist. It really does seem to me that the Liberal party in its essence and nature has gone out of existence. It has passed this, the acute stage of opposition, first to toleration, and has now come to acceptance of the Government policy. In fact, the form of their disease of Liberalism is so mild that one would fancy that the whole Liberal party had been vaccinated with the lymph of Conservatism in their childhood—(laughter). They are trying to look as like Conserva-

tives as possible, but I don't think it will do. They are trying to steal our clothes ; but as soon as they put them on everybody can see that they won't fit. The sturdy farmer looks very much too large for the pale, shrunk figure of the hungry Radical, who wants to divide everything with the have-nothings because he is jealous of the have-alls—(loud cheering). I am now going to speak to you on matters to which I have given considerable attention—namely, matters of foreign policy. There is a very considerable difference between the principle of the foreign policy of the two parties in this country. The Liberals have for a central and guiding principles in their foreign policy, indifference, abstention, and carelessness. Mr. Gladstone has himself complained that we are called upon to give so much attention to foreign affairs. He would have you give very little attention, or no attention at all to them. The notion of the Liberal party is that foreign affairs can be treated like parochial matters. On the other hand, the Conservative party treat foreign affairs in an imperial sense, and I say that between parochialism and imperialism, give me imperialism—(cheers). They say they don't like to interfere, but they do occasionally interfere, and interfere a very great deal. Mr. Gladstone himself interfered on behalf of the great slave-holding confederacy of the South during the war between the Southern and Northern States of America. He did not interfere by force of arms, but in a less worthy manner. He went up and down the country declaring that the South were fighting for their independence, and they had made a nation, thereby showing, as he has shown on many other occasions, he has not the gift of political prophecy—(applause). It is a historical fact that this was absolutely one of the things alleged by the United States at the Geneva tribunal of arbitration, and one of the very things which fixed upon the English taxpayers the payment of four millions of money, which, as I have said before, should have come out of Mr. Gladstone's own pocket. They interfered in a very base manner, when France was about to engage in the great struggle which ended in her terrible defeat. Yes, they interfered then, and sent menacing despatches to the allies of France, who, otherwise, would have been at her side in the struggle. Again, they interfered in Ashantee in order to prevent the Ashantees from having free access to, and free trade, with the coast. They did not interfere with Russia when she tore up the Black Sea Treaty ; they never interfered when Denmark was dismembered by the conspirators, Aus-

tria and Prussia. No, there is a measure in their interference. They say they can feel indignation with wrong-doing and enthusiasm for right; but when a Liberal Minister is going to feel indignation at wrong-doing, he first calls for statistics, to see whether the country that has done wrong has got a large army or navy. If it has, he subdues his indignation and allows the wrong-doer to go on exactly as he pleases. The Liberals are prepared to resist wrong-doing, but it must be the wrong-doing of a country which has no army, or an army that does not exceed 150 men—(laughter). There is a sentiment which has long been the chosen theme of statesmen and poets, although I am aware it has been much decried lately—I allude to the sentiment of patriotism. I not only believe that it is a good sentiment for Englishmen to entertain but for all men. It seems quite natural and proper that a man should love the place wherein he was born and the citizens amongst whom he lives. If you find a man who repudiates the country in which he was born, deserts that country, and shows no feeling for it, then beware of that man and distrust him, for he will on occasion desert his friends and the principles he professes as soon as they cease to be of service to him—(applause). We have not been greatly over-burdened with patriotism in a very considerable number of men belonging to the Liberal party. Patriotism, with them, instead of being a noble, stirring theme, seems more like a noxious draught which they must occasionally swallow. Sometimes they must take it and when that is so they treat it as a black draught, pinch their noses and make a face over it—(laughter and cheers). If there is any man who regards it otherwise, who has sufficient patriotism to believe that this country should perform every duty and maintain her rights even at the hazard of war, however dreadful it may be, then he is called a Jingo. Very well, if to be very careful of the honour of my country, if to be jealous of her welfare, and anxious for her safety is to be a Jingo, then I am a Jingo, and I am proud of the name—(loud cheers.) Remember this, you have in this little England the greatest prize the world ever offered to the cupidity of a conqueror. Remember this, that whoever possesses England possesses the empire of the seas—(cheers)—possesses India, and possesses the greatest riches that the world at present can offer both in the east and west. It is to be expected that the men who value these great possessions should feel a noble and fervent patriotism, and be prepared to make any sacrifice to maintain them—(cheers). We hear of people who are

not ashamed to stand up and say, "Perish India!" I tell them India will not perish as a British possession; but what will perish will be the name and reputation of those false Englishmen who have dared to put such sentiments in the form of words—(cheers). Some people have asked, what is the use of India to us? I may answer that by asking what is the use of the Isle of Wight, or of Oxfordshire, or Mr. Samuelson—(cheers and laughter)—or any other great and valuable possession of this country. But I will make another kind of answer. The Indian revenue is £50,000,000 per annum. The trade of India amounts to £100,000,000 per annum, and this trade is chiefly carried on with this country, so that out of every sovereign of that trade some Englishman gets a profit. In addition to that, there is £100,000,000 of British capital sunk in railways in India alone. Moreover, the debt of India, which is nearly all held by British capitalists, amounts to £125,000,000. In addition to this there are works, buildings, and the salaries which our youth are earning in India. The real money value of India, is, I venture to say, as much as £700,000,000, or £800,000,000 sterling, or nearly as much as the National Debt. This is its money value, but I am not going to ask you to take an interest in India, merely because of its money value. That is a Liberal way of looking at things. I will give you higher grounds than this. There are 130,000 Englishmen and women in India, and 190,000,000 of the Queen's subjects, who, although they are not English by race, still are entitled to the protection of the Queen's Government, and the sympathy of Englishmen—(applause). I would further point out to you that India alone contains four-fifths of the whole of the Queen's subjects, that it embraces an area of a million and a half square miles, being nearly half as large as the whole of Europe, and the population nearly two-thirds as many as the whole of the population of Europe. Over this splendid country the British flag has floated for 150 years. Ever since our flag has been there it has announced and still announces that England is one of the greatest countries of this world. And she will remain one of the greatest countries so long as she keeps her flag there. The value of India was never doubted before. It was known in the earliest times. From Alexander of Macedon to Alexander of Russia, there was never a man who aspired to universal empire but cast his eyes upon India as the greatest prize of conquest. India still excites envy, and Russia has again and again taken steps with a

view to conquer it. In 1800, the Emperor Paul gave absolute orders to Orloff, the Hetman of the Cossacks, to invade it. Again, in 1807, at Tilsitt, when the articles of the Treaty of Tilsitt were agreed to, a secret article stipulated that it should be invaded jointly by the French and the Russians. Step by step, and mile by mile, the Russians have been advancing. Forty years ago the Russian frontier was 1,000 miles distant from the frontier of India, and between the two there were the trackless Kirghiz Steppes. The Russian frontier in 1838 was at Orenburg and a Siberian line of forts, and you must remember that on these Steppes, and in the desert which lay beyond, there was nothing to gain, there was no masses of subjects on whom any taxation could be levied; and it must be clear that from that moment Russia entered upon the profitless desert, she has had her eye, not upon the desert, for that is worth nothing, but upon the rich prize of India which lies beyond it—(applause). In 1838 the advance of Russia towards India began, and in 1847 she had pushed up to Jaxartes. In 1864 she invaded Bokhara, and took Chemkend, and upon that occasion, being challenged by the English Government, the Russian Government began that long series of subterfuges by which it has always endeavoured to deceive the English people. When the Russians took Chemkend, Prince Gortschakoff being asked for an explanation, replied, "Here is the limit to which reason prescribes us to go and at which it commands us to stop." "This," he said, "is our final object." But while Prince Gortschakoff was talking to us in St. Petersburg about this "final object," the Russian generals were marching far beyond the "final object," and General Tcherniaeff was capturing Tashkend. In 1868, rumours arose of an expedition against Khiva, and even Lord Granville was alarmed and asked for an explanation. He was informed that the expedition was "entirely commercial;" but in the same year the Russians occupied Samarcand. They promised to evacuate that place, but they never did so, and they are there to this day. In 1869 another expedition annexed Krasnovodsk. We now come up to 1873, when Earl Granville asked for explanations, and Count Schouvaloff was authorised by the Emperor to declare and did declare solemnly that it was not only far from the intention of the Emperor to take possession of Khiva, but positive orders had been prepared to prevent it." Yet, in September, 1873, the very same year when this assurance was given, the Russians captured Khiva, annexed the Khivan territory, and made the

Khan sign a treaty by which he acknowledged himself the humble servant of the Czar of Russia. I only mention these facts in order to make good my ground and show you that we have no absolute security for any of our possessions in that part of the world except our strength and that we have a vigilant and unscrupulous enemy against whom, sooner or later, we must defend ourselves. Against her indeed we have already had to defend ourselves. In October, 1877, Lord Derby reminded Russia of her repeated assurances that "Afghanistan was completely outside the sphere in which Russia sought to exercise her influence," for it had been stated that the Russians were corresponding with the Ameer of Cabul. As a reply to Lord Derby, Prince Gortschakoff telegraphed to Count Schouvaloff "deny categorically that Kauffmann is acting at Cabul either by an agent or in other manner." On the 15th of November Prince Gortschakoff wrote that "there was no Russian agent at Cabul so far as he knew." But unfortunately for Russia the English government had got possession of the correspondence between the Russian and the Ameer of Cabul. In November of the same year Lord Loftus, our ambassador at St. Petersburg, handed over to Mr. De Giers, of the Russian foreign office, the text of the correspondence, and in July 1878, Mr. De Giers, giving up the matter of the correspondence, said he could inform Lord Loftus solemnly that if there had been correspondence, at any rate "no mission had been or was intended to be sent to Cabul, either by the Imperial government or by General Kauffmann." But in July 1878, at the very moment Mr. De Giers was making this declaration, a Russian Envoy was on his way to Cabul, backed by 15,000 men. This was the immediate cause which led to the Afghan war. But now I am going to tell you a very interesting little story about the first cause of the Afghan war. I have been reading a letter in the *Banbury Guardian* in which the writer goes back to Charles the First in order to find missiles to throw at me—(laughter). Well, I am not going back quite so far as Charles the First, but I shall go back to 40 years ago, and show you the beginning of our troubles with Afghanistan. In 1835, there was a Conservative government in office—a Tory government it was called in those days—I like the good old word Tory—(loud cheering). A Tory government was in office, and it became necessary to appoint a governor-General for India. The Government gave the appointment to a man eminent throughout Europe for his diplomacy, Lord Heytesbury. The appoint-

ment had received the ratification of the sovereign. Lord Heytesbury was sworn in, he had bought his outfit, had received the usual parting banquet from the Directors of the East India Company, and was on the point of departure, when a motion was introduced by the heads of the Liberal party—then called Whig—against the Tory Government. The motion was this—that the surplus revenues of the Irish Church should be applied to education in Ireland. It was a motion directed against the Tory Government. It was resisted, and amongst the most eminent men who resisted the motion, and made a most excellent speech against it was the Right Hon. William Ewart Gladstone—(laughter). He was a Tory then, and he stood up in the foremost ranks against this principle of taking the revenues of the Irish Church and applying them to education. He then used some very remarkable words, and said, speaking of this proposal—“I hope I may never live to see the day when this principle shall be adopted in England.” His hope has been falsified, that trust has been deceived. He has lived to see the day, and he is himself the very man who has brought the day and the very thing which he, forty years ago, hoped he should never live to see—(loud cheers). Well, Mr. Gladstone’s advocacy of the Tory Government did not prevail. The House of Commons passed the resolution, and the Tory Government left office and the Whigs came in. The very first thing the Whigs did was to rescind the appointment of Lord Heytesbury, and they appointed in his stead the Whig placeman, Lord Auckland, to be Governor-General, in spite of the indignant protest of the Board of Directors. He went out, and what might have been expected from the character of the man happened. At that moment we were on terms of friendship with the Afghans, Dost Mahomed was our friend, and he said, “Befriend me, I will cling to your skirts, and although you should cut off my hands I will still cling to you for protection.” He appealed to us for protection against Russia. M’Neil, one of the greatest of Eastern statesmen recommended strongly that his appeal should be granted. Burnes also recommended it. There was no man who understood the situation, but recommended that we should stand by Dost Mahomed. But Lord Auckland, instead of doing this, paltered with him, and treated with contumely the last ally we had. Dost Mahomed turned from England to Russia, and received a Russian envoy. There was no rejection of the English envoy, but Lord Auckland declared war against him, and sent troops into his country to dethrone him. He dethroned

the Ameer, and set up a mere puppet, Shah Soojah, who was assassinated. In 1842 occurred the fearful massacre, when 15,000 of our troops were killed, and there was only one man left to tell the tale. We went back to Cabul and took a signal, I shall not say an unnecessary vengeance. But thus a blood feud was established which has lasted from that moment up to the present day. This was the first origin of all our Afghan troubles, and it makes good what I said in my address, that all our troubles in that country have arisen from a Whig job perpetrated forty years ago. I myself very greatly and very seriously deplore the war that has taken place in Afghanistan. If I had my will England should have gone not to Cabul but to St. Petersburg for satisfaction—(cheers). I do feel that being in occupation of the country we have a very great and a very serious responsibility resting upon us. We are bound—in honour bound—by everything which can bind a nation to re-establish in Afghanistan a settled form of government, under which the Afghans may live happily and peaceably. I don't believe the rumour which Mr. Gladstone has alluded to in his address that there is an intention on the part of the Government to cede the city of Herat to Persia. If ever we allow the city of Herat to fall into the hands of Persia, it will become Russian. I can only say that if you return me to the House of Commons—(A voice, "Never.") Well, we shall see—(cheers). To put it in another form, I will say when you have returned me to the House of Commons—(cheers)—if any such proposal be made either by a Conservative Government or any other, I shall resist it to the best of my ability. Herat occupies such a position that it has justly been called the "key to India." It stands in the midst of a fertile valley, and is called the rose garden and granary of Central Asia. At Herat converge all the principal roads of Central Asia, and by Herat every conqueror of India has gone. Therefore, I would never consent to any Government handing over Herat to Persia, for I believe if the thing is ever done, it will not be very long before it is found to be in the possession of Russia. Herat must be held either by or under England, or by a friendly power capable of keeping it. I have spoken to you at some length upon the Eastern question, but there is also another question, which will be pressing in a very short time, that will be the Western question. Denmark has been plundered, Austria has been plundered, France has been plundered, Turkey has been plundered. During the last twenty years, there has been a general game

of grab going on over the whole of Europe. When we look abroad we see millions and millions of armed men. Russia has over two millions available of men, and is rapidly approaching three millions. Germany has two millions. France two millions, and Italy scarcely less. All these preparations are not being made for nothing. and the time will come, when we must ask ourselves whether we are to take such steps as shall maintain our part in Europe, and retain that position which can only be retained as long as we stand armed like a strong man armed keeping his house—(applause). There are some petty practitioners of politics who propose as a remedy a general disarmament. But who is going to begin? It can't be England. Why, the English army is not one-tenth so large as that of any of the other great powers of Europe. It is an absolute fact that there is not any other great power in England but has an army tentimes as large as England. Therefore, we are not going to disarm, whoever does—(applause). It is my belief that, instead of disarming, we must arm a little more. These eminent statesmen calling themselves Liberals, when in office, took care to disorganise the army, and we have got to re-organise it again, which will be no small trouble to whatever Government that undertakes it. It is my belief that we must be prepared in a very short time, for events which will cause you to increase the army, and that if it is not done, this country may be found standing in an insecure position amongst armed nations of the Continent. If we are to strengthen our army, I hope we shall also strengthen the great defence of this country, our navy. I do trust that whatever occurs, we shall find our Government in a position to make the navy equal to any two navies of any two powers in Europe—(cheers). Even more than this I should desire to see; with less we should not be commonly safe. Another matter I wish to call your attention to is the law of nations with regard to maritime warfare. I shall not go into the details of the question, but will simply state that in 1856, at the close of the Crimean War, a declaration was signed at Paris by which, in effect, England lost her power of capturing her enemy's goods at sea, which she used to exercise, and by the exercise of which very power she had met, fought, and defeated at sea the combined forces of the whole of Europe. At the beginning of this century, there was not a port in Europe friendly to England from the North Cape to the Rock of Gibraltar, but by the exercise of this right of capturing our enemy's goods at sea we strangled off all our

enemies, and either made them subject to treaty obligation enforced by us or made them turn round and become our allies. That is one thing, which if you return me to Parliament I shall very seriously take up. There is no doubt that in Ireland there is a considerable amount of distress ; though I am not myself quite certain if the distress is so great as some would have us to believe. I know there is a very great deal of distress amongst the farmers and agricultural classes in England, but we do not hear so much about their distress as we do about the distress in Ireland. I am glad to see that the Government have taken means to relieve the distress in Ireland, and while I hope they will be successful in dealing with it, I trust that their efforts will not tend to the further pauperising of the Irish people, or to make them look to the state for aid rather than to depend upon their own exertions. I must remind you that this distress in Ireland is no new thing. There has always been distress in Ireland. It has always been a poor country. There has always been much poverty in Ireland, and it has always been taken advantage of for personal purposes by political agitators. Every kind of remedy has been attempted. First we had Catholic Emancipation, then the disestablishment of the Irish Church, but that did not mend matters much. We have also had that heaven-sent measure, Mr. Gladstone's Land Act, but that has not mended matters. So far from this, we find that Home Rulers had, instead of keeping within their first limits of comparative reason, and making a reasonable and feasible demand, have begun an agitation for the deprivation of the landlords of Ireland, and the handing over of the land to their tenants without payment. There have been many attempts to remove the causes of discontent in Ireland, by exceptional indulgences, but my belief is that it is entirely a mistake on the part of the British Legislature to pass any exceptional measures for Ireland, and that the Irish ought to be treated as Englishmen are treated. I would treat the Irish tenant as well as the English tenant, but no better. I would give to the Irish landlord the same protection as the English landlord, and I would give to those men in Ireland who perpetrated outrage, violence, and murder, the same treatment as men receive in this island who are guilty of such things — (cheers). We have very deep and great agricultural distress in this country. It has been attributed to various causes, and some have attributed it to the land laws, and principally to the law of entail. Now it seems to me absurd to attribute the agricultural

distress, which has only arisen in the last few years, to a law which has existed for 600 years—(applause). I am prepared to maintain that the practice of entail has not been calculated to produce distress. That practice seeks to keep estates in the same families. What is the result? All of you who are acquainted with agricultural matters, know that the Liberal landlord, the considerate landlord, is the landlord who belongs to the old family and who has inherited the estates from his fathers. You know perfectly well that the grinding landlord is the man who having made a large fortune invests it in land, and tries to get every farthing he can out of his tenants. Therefore I say the practice of entail cannot be one of the causes of the present distress. Then there are some who say that the law of Primogeniture is one of the causes of distress. That law is brought to bear in case of a man failing to make a will. It directs that in the case of a man dying intestate, his real property shall go the eldest son. But the man can make a will. He may leave his land to anybody, and it is only if he doesn't make a will that the law steps in and says the land shall go to the eldest son. Practically, there is not one case of this sort in a hundred. Therefore I say it is impossible to say this law has anything to do with the distress. The real cause we know. It doesn't require any very great insight to know what it is. To begin with, we have had a series of bad seasons, such as nobody can remember. But they are coming to an end. I believe we are going to have a series of good seasons, and that by them a great deal of the past will be made up to us. But there is another thing far more serious than the bad seasons, for the seasons will mend. There is the American competition. Now we must remember that the American competition is the means of giving us food, which otherwise we might lack. The result has been, however, a great diminution of prices, and a great loss to the farmer. My belief is that if the competition goes on it will be absolutely necessary to lower the rents of farms all over the country—(applause). I am glad to see that a large number of landlords have spontaneously and generously recognized this, and have made a substantial reduction in the rents of their lands—(applause). I have one other little matter, or large matter, to bring before you, and that is the budget. The budget was brought forward last night, and I have looked over it this morning. When Sir Stafford Northcote had made his speech, Mr. Gladstone rose in his place and said that he would reserve any criticism upon it—(laughter). He complained, however, that

Sir Stafford Northcote's speech on the budget was too short. Well, nobody can ever say that Mr. Gladstone's speeches are too short. But I am now going to describe the leading features of the budget to you even more shortly than Sir Stafford Northcote. You know what bad times we have had, what troublesome times we have experienced, and what drains upon the national purse we have had to meet. Every kind of trouble has come upon the national purse. The Zulu war cost £5,000,000 of money, not quite so much after all as the Abyssinian which cost £9,000,000. I even wonder that Sir Stafford Northcote has been able to give so good an account as has—(applause). Taking the figures of last year's estimate there is a deficit of £3,340,000. That, of course, we all regret, but the cause mainly or entirely lies in the falling off in the revenue which is due to the bad times. The revenue has fallen off to the extent of no less than £2,000,000. There is one remarkable thing about this and it is how the falling off of the £2,000,000 is mainly accounted for by a diminution of one and a half millions in customs duties and excise levied upon spirits. I am glad to see that encouraging fact, and I hope it shows that the people are getting more sober, and are in less need than ever of the local option for which your present member voted the other day—(laughter and applause.) So much for the past year. Let us now look at the future. The expenditure for the year beginning 31st March 1880 is estimated to be £81,486,472. That expenditure is less than last year by £2,713,528 or nearly three million of money—(applause.) I say that is a remarkable and very creditable feature in times like these with all the calls upon the national purse for the Conservative Government to be able to come to you and to tell you they are going to spend three millions of money less than last year—(loud applause). I am going to make some remarks about the National Debt. On the 31st March, 1874, just after the Liberals left office, the National Debt was £779,283,245. On the 31st March, 1880 it amounted to £777,548,495. That shows an increase of £2,000,000 during the time the Conservatives have been in office. But that increase is only apparent. A large portion of it represents no increase in the debt itself, but is only an increase in the issue of sums repayable such as loans to public bodies, for which security is held, Suez Canal shares, and the loan to India, amounting to four and a half millions. Therefore, taking the four and a half millions off the debt the result will be that it is really three and a

quarter millions less than when the Liberals left office—(applause). That is a good thing, but the great point of the budget is this, that there is to be no additional taxation—(A voice, Afghanistan). No additional expenditure this year and three millions less expenditure than last year. I am glad to see that the Co-operative stores which were formerly exempt from income tax are in future to be as I think very properly subjected to the same income tax as other societies—(loud applause). But there is to be no increase of taxation on the taxpayer at large, and that I say is a remarkable fact considering the hard times which have come to us—(applause). I have heard it said on some hands that I perhaps don't mean to fight this contest through—(a voice, "You will win too.") Well I should have hoped no man would think I am such a fool as to come down here and begin a thing I was not going to carry through—(applause). I tell you that having entered upon the contest I shall go to the poll if I only get one vote—(loud applause). I tell you I shall go to the poll and my thorough honest belief, derived from a certain amount of communication with the electors, is that I shall come away from the poll the member for Banbury—(loud and continued applause). When the result has been achieved I shall know that it has been due to no merits of my own but to the spirit of the people of Banbury who are tired of being regarded and treated at the property of one man in this town—(loud applause)—and they feel determined that their voice shall be spoken in favour of the great party upon whose predominance depends the honour and integrity of the empire, and the future welfare of all the citizens of this great country—(loud applause).

The CHAIRMAN—If any gentleman likes to ask a question of Mr. Bowles, he is open to answer any question you may put to him—(applause).

No one responding, the CHAIRMAN said—As everybody appears perfectly satisfied with the remarks of Mr. Bowles, I beg to move a vote of confidence in him as your candidate for this election.

The announcement was received with loud cheering and waving of hats, Mr. Bowles bowing his acknowledgments.

The CHAIRMAN then put the contrary, when only one or two hands were held up and the CHAIRMAN said he thought it would require a microscope to see who they were, and he therefore declared the vote of confidence carried with only one dissident.

Mr. BOWLES—Electors of Banbury, I thank you from my heart for the honour you have done me this evening by an almost unanimous vote, for I think there was only one dissentient. I can only tell you this, that if you send me to Parliament I shall not look upon it as a mere lounging club or as a means of raising me in the general scale. I shall consider I have entered upon a grave and serious task. I shall do my duty, and when the end of the first session shall come I shall not be ashamed to come down here and render an account of the stewardship which you place in my hands—(applause). I have one pleasing duty to perform, and that is to propose a vote of thanks to our excellent Chairman—(applause). I am sure you, as well as myself are greatly obliged to Mr. Tritton for coming down here this evening—(applause)—for the excellent speech he made to you and for the proper and dignified manner in which he has presided over these proceedings.

Three cheers were then given for Mr. Tritton, and Mr. Barford called for three cheers for Lord Beaconsfield and the Government. Cheers were also given for Mr. Bowles, and the meeting, which was very orderly throughout, separated.





